

RELI 1024 Syllabus

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Fall 2012

Instructor: Holly Jordan
Email Address: hjl@vt.edu
Class Time/Room: TTh 2-3:15 PM, McBryde 219
CRN: 98085
Office Hours/Office: Wednesdays 4-5 and by appointment, Lane 211

Liberal Education Information:

Three credits. Satisfies CLE Areas 2 and 7.

Course Description:

Department of Religion Course Description: The nature of "religion," approaches to understanding "religion," traditional and contemporary features of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, including their manifestations in the USA and their involvement in critical issues in a global context. (3H,3C). II.

Texts for the Course:

The required textbook for this class is Willard G. Oxtoby's World Religions: Western Traditions, Third Edition.

In addition, you also must have access, either in print or online, to a Hebrew Bible, a New Testament, and a Qur'an. If you wish to purchase copies specifically for this class, the recommended editions are:

- The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha. 3rd Edition. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001.
- The Qur'an (Oxford World's Classics). by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (Translator). Oxford University Press, USA; New Ed edition (July 28, 2005)

In addition, PDFs and links will be posted on Scholar.

New Media for the Course:

Important to this course will be conversation, both in class and on your own. This course will employ both blogging and tweeting:

- Course Motherblog: <http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/reli1024jordan/>
- Course Twitter hashtag: #reli1024f12

Course Structure and Rules of Conduct:

The structure of our classes will change from session to session. Some days will rely more on lecture; others will be student-led. As this is a class happening in real time, a day's scheduled events may change if there is an item in the news worth bringing to the table.

As unstructured as this sounds, I do have a few rules. First, just be the adults you are. I expect everyone to treat both the material and each other with respect. Religious *tolerance* is expected from each student. At no time will you have to discuss your personal religious beliefs, but if you do,

assume that you will be treated with courtesy. I am big fan of Virginia Tech's *Principles of Community*. They will be in force in any academic setting: class, Scholar, blogs. Please be aware of them and act accordingly: <http://www.vt.edu/diversity/principles-of-community.html>.

Second, come to class on time. If you are consistently late to class without explanation, your participation grade will suffer.

Third, use whatever technology you need to do well in this class (computers, iPads, Kindles, etc.), even if that means quickly looking up a word on your phone's dictionary. That being said, use your technology wisely. If something your doing with your tech is distracting to me or someone else, we may need to have a talk. Bring whatever you need to do well.

Finally, check your email. Set Scholar up to forward messages to your email if you are not good at checking Scholar often. Check your email before class daily to make sure there have not been last-minute handouts or articles sent out.

Attendance Policy:

Come to class. Come to class prepared. If for some reason, you are not prepared that day, still come to class. You are paying for this degree. Come to class.

If you are absent, you still must complete any work due that day. You will be allowed two unexcused absences this semester (I don't feel like it/It's too pretty outside/I just want to eat lunch/etc. days). Use them wisely. More than two will affect your participation grade. Legitimate situations may arise during the semester that keep you from class (illness, family death, religious holiday, etc.). If you plan to be absent for a session, please notify me via email before that session. If you are unable to attend class unexpectedly, please notify me before the next class session with the reason for your absence. Absences ultimately will only be considered "excused" if proper documentation (doctor's note, etc.) is provided within a week of the absence.

Grades Breakdown:

- Weekly Blog Posts (15%): Ten times during the semester, students will write a blog post on a topic from the *upcoming* week's readings, to be posted by 8 p.m. Sunday nights. These posts will begin with the course material and document your exploration of the topic online. Students will also respond to a minimum of *two* other students' blog entries *each week* by 8 p.m. Wednesday nights, regardless of whether they posted that week. Students are highly encouraged to post in addition to these ten times about anything relating to the course. See Scholar for a more detailed explanation of this requirement, including minimum standards for credit.
- Judaism Quiz (5%) – For each religion, we will have an in-class quiz covering materials from the Oxtoby text. This quiz will be towards the beginning of each religion and will ascertain whether students have a basic understanding of the religion from assigned course materials before doing a deep-dive into critical issues within the religion. There will be a study guide.
- Judaism Paper (10%) – Students will turn in a scholarly analysis paper after we finish studying each religion. Students will pick from predetermined topics or have the opportunity to choose their own topic in conjunction with me. Details (length, format, etc.) are available on Scholar.
- Christianity Quiz (5%)
- Christianity Paper (10%)
- Islam Quiz (5%)

- Islam Paper (10%)
- Group Presentation (10%): Happening at three times throughout the semester, these presentations will look at a modern issue in a particular religion. Students will present once during the semester, and sign-ups for presentations will happen early in the semester. Requirements for the presentations are posted under “Resources” on Scholar. Students’ grades for presentations will be graded along the following criteria:
 - *Individual group members’ annotated bibliographies*
 - *Report from group’s first group meeting*
 - *Written portion of group project*
 - *Presentation in class*
- Participation (15%): Participation will be based on attendance and involvement in class discussions.
- Final Essay (15%): The final essay will be due on Thursday December 17 by 9:45 a.m. on Scholar and will cover material from the entire course as applied to the material presented on December 11.
- Students in this course will be graded on a plus/minus system (i.e. A, A-, B+):
A: 100-93, A-: 92-90, B+: 89-87, B: 86-83, B-: 82-80, C+: 79-77, C: 76-73, C-: 72-70, D+: 69-67, D: 66-63, D-: 62-60, F: 59-0
- NOTE: Students maintaining an A or a B in this course prior to the final essay may elect to exempt the final essay and take their current grade, pending direct approval from the instructor.

Academic Integrity

I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in this class. On all projects, I will make sure students are aware of the expected outcomes and project guidelines. All work will be appraised under the guidelines of Virginia Tech’s Honor Code: <http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

Students Requiring Accommodations:

If you are a student with special needs or circumstances, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible during my office hours or see me before or after class.

Tentative Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction

August 28 – Introduction to the course

August 30 – Introduction to the course continued; Introduction to technology in this course
(bring your laptop/tablet)

Readings: Oxtoby, Chapter 1

Week 2: Introduction to Judaism

September 4 – Judaism/Framing Questions

Readings: Oxtoby, Chapter 3

Note: Signups for group projects will happen in-class today.

September 6 – Judaism Quiz; Lecture and Q&A

Readings: Quiz material will be pulled from Oxtoby, Chapter 3. See Scholar for study guide.

Week 3: Judaism: Traditions

September 11 – The Bible, Talmud, Midrash, Canon, and Extra Things

Readings:

- Creation and Fall - Genesis 1-3 (Compare with Jubilees 3 – on Scholar)
- Covenants: Genesis 9:1-19, 17; Exodus 19-20:21; 2 Samuel 5:1-10; 7
- Judges and Kings: Judges 4, 6-8; 1 Samuel 8-10:1, 16; 1 Kings 2:1-12, 11; 2 Chronicles 36
- Talmud: See Talmud handouts on Scholar
- Midrash: Genesis 22-23:2 and the Genesis Rabbah (on Scholar)

September 13 – Traditions – Holidays and Life-Cycle Ceremonies

Readings: What Is a Jew – Sections III, VI, and VII (See Scholar)

Week 4: Judaism: Modernity

September 18 – Judaism Film – *The Jazz Singer*

Note: Class will begin 5 minutes early and end 10 minutes late.

September 20 – The Arab-Israeli Conflict – Part 1

Readings: Herzl – The Jewish Question (read through page 15 – skim rest), the Balfour Declaration, the White Paper of 1939, (See Scholar)

Week 5: Judaism: Wrap-up

September 25 – Student-directed conversation (based on blog research)

September 27 – Judaism presentations

Week 6: Introduction to Christianity

October 2 – Judaism paper due; Christianity/Framing Questions

Readings: Oxtoby, Chapter 4

October 4 – Christianity Quiz; Lecture and Q&A

Readings: Quiz material will be pulled from Oxtoby, Chapter 4. See Scholar for study guide.

Week 7: Christianity: Traditions

October 9 – Historical Jesus, Paul, and Heretics

Readings: Luke 1-2, Mark 1:1-20; John 2:13-22; Matthew 5:1-7:28, Mark 12:28-34; Mark 6:30-44, Matthew 21:1-17; one of the following: Matthew 26-end, Mark 14-end, Luke 22-end, John 12-end; Romans (entirety); Infancy Gospel of Thomas (see Scholar)

October 11 – **Class Cancelled**

Week 8: Christianity: Traditions continued

October 16 – Traditions – Holidays and Life-Cycle Ceremonies

Readings: Refer back to Oxtoby, pp. 231-233

October 18 – **Class Cancelled**

Week 9: Christianity in Modernity

October 23 – Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, and Everyone Else

Readings: Christianity: A Very Short Introduction, Chapters 3-6 – See Scholar

October 25 – Christianity in America, begin Christianity film – *Saved!*

Readings: Refer back to Oxtoby, pp. 243-245

Week 10: Christianity: Wrap-up

October 30 - Finish Christianity film – *Saved!*; Student-directed conversation

November 1 – Christianity presentations

Week 11: Introduction to Islam

November 6 – Christianity paper due; Islam/Framing Questions

Readings: Oxtoby, Chapter 5

November 8 – Islam quiz; Lecture and Q&A

Readings: Quiz material will be pulled from Oxtoby, Chapter 5. See Scholar for study guide.

Week 12: Islam: Traditions

November 13 – Muhammad, the Five Pillars, and the Qur'an

Readings: The Koran: A Very Short Introduction, Chapters 1-2, 6,-7, 11-12 – See Scholar

November 15 – Sunni, Shi'a, Seveners, Twelvers, Sufis, and Everyone In-Between

Readings: Refer back to Oxtoby, pp. 268-290

Week 13: Thanksgiving

Nov 20 – Thanksgiving Break

Nov 22 – Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: Islam: Modernity

November 27 – Traditions – Holidays and Life-Cycle Ceremonies

Readings: Refer back to Oxtoby, pp. 297-302

November 29 – The Arab-Israeli Conflict – Part 2

Readings: ANERA packets – see Scholar; Qutb – Social Justice in Islam, Chapters 8-9 – See Scholar

Week 15: Islam: Wrap-up

December 4 – Islam film – *Reel Bad Arabs*; Student-direct conversation

December 7 – Islam presentations

Week 16: Epilogue: The Big Picture

December 11 – Islam essays due; Doctor Who – “The Impossible Planet”/“The Satan Pit”

Note: Class will begin 5 minutes early and end 10 minutes late this day.

December 13 – Reading Day

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. Any changes to this syllabus will be made available to students as soon as possible.